

LAST SHOTS



The Creek of New Hope

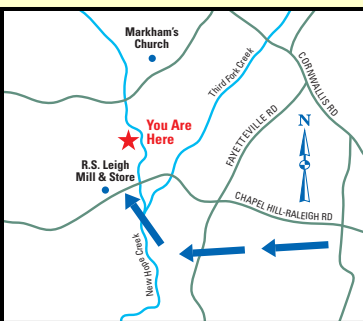
CAROLINAS CAMPAIGN



The Carolinas Campaign began on February 1, 1865, when Union Gen. William T. Sherman led his army north from Savannah, Georgia, after the "March to the Sea." Sherman's objective was to join Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia to crush Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Scattered Confederate forces consolidated in North Carolina, the Confederacy's logistical lifeline, where Sherman defeated Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's last-ditch attack at Bentonville. After Sherman was reinforced at Goldsboro late in March, Johnston saw the futility of further resistance and surrendered on April 26, essentially ending the Civil War.

Union forces occupied Raleigh on April 13, as Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick pursued retreating Confederates. The next day, he divided his cavalry command, sending two brigades north along the railway past Brassfield Station toward Durham's Station while Gen. Smith D. Atkins led his brigade westward. Atkins pursued the retreating

Confederates to New Hope Creek in what is today southwestern Durham. The opposing forces clashed three times near here – the third skirmish being the last of the Civil War in North Carolina.

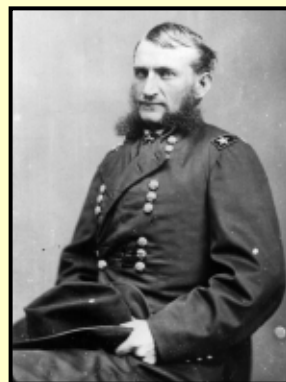


The first engagement, the final picket fight of the war, occurred when seven Confederates ambushed and killed twelve

Union pickets in present-day southwest Durham. The other Federals marched through Richard Stanford Leigh's 1,000-acre

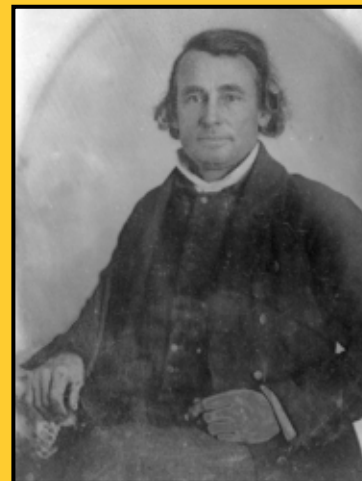
plantation on present-day Stagecoach Road to New Hope Creek, where they found that the Confederates had destroyed the bridge. As they forded the creek, Confederate forces attacked with pistols and single-shot carbines. Although the Confederates held the high ground, their weapons were no match for the Union soldiers' new Spencer repeating rifles, and they withdrew, leaving three dead.

About a mile upstream, the Confederates, with artillery, held the high ground and blocked



Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick
– Courtesy Library of Congress

the way. Union Col. William D. Hamilton ordered covering fire as his 9th Ohio Cavalry advanced. Suddenly, the gunfire stopped when news of a truce declared by Gens. William T. Sherman and Joseph E. Johnston at James Bennett's farm, less than 10 miles north, reached both sides almost simultaneously. The last shots of the Civil War in North Carolina had been fired.



Richard Stanford Leigh owned and farmed most of this land in 1865. A Leigh cousin, Nancy, and her husband, James Bennett, hosted Gens. Sherman and Johnston as they debated the terms of the Confederate surrender at what is now Bennett Place State Historic Site.

Richard Stanford Leigh – Courtesy Curtis Booker